



President's Message
Don Hiller - JLW Produce

I would like to wish everybody a Happy New Year and hope this will be a good year for our watermelon family. We are working hard on our 23rd Annual Convention in Wilmington to make it one of our best ever. There is a new format this year that we hope everybody will enjoy. Please let us know, after the convention, your opinion of the new format. We invite you to communicate any ideas or issues that we should be working on as your Watermelon Association. The NCWA Queen has done an outstanding job this year helping promote watermelons and we are sure she will do an outstanding job at the National Convention.

In December I attended the Southeast Vegetable & Fruit Expo, sponsored by the NC Vegetable Growers Association and thought it was a very beneficial experience. The Expo Educational Sessions provided a quality program with valuable information for all types of NC produce. I recommend the two groups support each other and attend their respective Conventions.

I encourage you to invite your neighbor to the NCWA Annual Convention where a good time will be had by all.

Executive Director's Report
Bonnie Holloman

2004 NCWA membership dues statements were mailed in December 2003. Please join the following list of individuals who have renewed their NCWA memberships. Send your dues and application today. Renewal of your membership and new memberships assures the NCWA will continue to be one of the best recognized and most active of the North Carolina commodity groups.

We are proud of the progress we have made utilizing the help of the National Watermelon Association, N.C. State University, the three Watermelon Festivals and the N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Service Marketing staff.

With their assistance, our summer promotional tour continues to grow and the awareness of our product across our state and our neighboring states has increased tremendously. Thank you for your help in making this possible.

Add your name to this list:

Arman, Inc., Murfreesboro, NC
Barefoot Farms, Linden, NC
Percy & Frances Bunch, Murfreesboro, NC
Coastal AgroBusiness, Inc., Murfreesboro, NC
Don Hiller, Baltimore, MD
Etheridge Produce, Raleigh, NC
Growers Marketing Service, Inc, Lakeland, FL
Jackson Farming Co., Autryville, NC
Joyce Farm, Stoneville, NC
Layton Farms, Edenton, NC
Murfreesboro Farm, Inc., Murfreesboro, NC
NCDA&CS/Ross Williams, Raleigh, NC
N.C. Watermelon Festival, Murfreesboro, NC
Raymon J. Land, Branford, FL
Jody Land, Branford, FL
Adrian Land, Branford, FL
Gloria & Rick Richardson, Raleigh, NC
Randy Avery, Winterville, NC
Reddick Fumigants, Williamston, NC
Seminis Vegetable Seed, Raleigh, NC
Siegers Seed Company, Arapahoe, NC
Smurfit Stone Container, Columbia, SC
Southern Container Corp. of Wilson, Wilson, NC
T.J. Taylor & Sons, Inc., Pendleton, NC
Virginia Fork Produce Co., Edenton, NC
Winterville Watermelon Festival, Winterville, NC

If you need additional membership renewal information, please give me a call at the Association office. (919) 334-0093.

2004 NCWA Convention:

Program and Registration information for the 23rd NCWA Annual Watermelon Convention has been mailed. The Convention is scheduled for March 12-13, 2004 at the Hilton Wilmington Riverside, Wilmington, North Carolina. Call today and make your hotel reservations (910) 763-5900 or (888) 324-8170. Room cut-off is February 9, 2004.

Dr. Schultheis has put together an informative educational session for Friday afternoon, March 12. On Saturday morning, March 13, join Michael Smith, NCDA&CS, Marketing Specialist, for a Marketing Update Report followed by a Buyers Update.

Following Michael and the Buyers you will hear from Britt Cobb, NC Commissioner of Agriculture, Mark Arney, Executive Director, National Watermelon Promotion Board; Tracy Rosselle, Executive Director, National Watermelon Association.

Anne Meares, NCWA Promotions Coordinator, will kick-off our fun-filled events with the Introduction of the 2004 Queen Contestants.

Make your plans to be with us at the NCWA Convention!

Promotions Coordinator Report

Anne Meares

It is hard to believe another year has passed and we will soon select a new NCWA Queen. As you can see from previous NCWA Newsletters, Queen Tracy and I have been busy this year!

I want to take this opportunity to thank Queen Tracy for her hard work and enthusiasm. As I write this article we are busy preparing for the National Watermelon Association Convention where Queen Tracy will represent the NCWA. We hope to see you in Las Vegas at the National Convention but if you cannot make the trip, please send Queen Tracy a note of encouragement and best wishes as she competes for the National title.

If you know a young woman who would be interested in competing in the 2004 NCWA Queen Pageant, please have them give me a call at (919) 556-2958. Following are the guidelines for the Queen Competition:

- You must be between the ages of 18 and 23 as of April 1, 2004.
- All competition will take place on that Saturday culminating with the annual awards banquet and the crowning of the 2004 North Carolina Watermelon Queen.
- The contest selection committee will choose up to ten contestants. Past contests have seen from seven to ten contestants.
- There is no entry fee. A sponsor will be secured for you.

- Contestants will be judged in four categories: Interview, Sportswear, Speech and Evening gown. Contestants will also need to bring a cocktail dress.

- The title of North Carolina Watermelon Queen brings with it the opportunity for much travel, numerous appearances and many promotions for the state association. The young woman chosen must be free during the summer months, especially weekends. The title should be viewed as a part time job.

- The NCWA Queen Pageant is a preliminary to the National Watermelon Queen Pageant to be held in Orlando Florida the last week of February 2005. This is an all expense paid trip for the winner and one other person.

- The winner is awarded \$1,500.00. \$500.00 is given the night of the competition. \$500.00 given mid-year and \$500.00 before the National Pageant. The young woman chosen will be paid \$50.00 for each work-day while on tour in addition to mileage which will be paid at thirty two cents a mile for all work related travel. The N. C. Watermelon Associations pays all expenses incurred while on tour.

NCDA&CS Marketing Specialist

Michael Smith

I hope all of you had a great Christmas and Happy New Year.

First let me say something about last year. We all know it was a difficult year with the rain, hail and Hurricane. I know we want to go ahead and get started with 2004 and I hope that it will be a great year for us.

We had some marketing projects this year that produced some good results for us. I will talk more about these projects at the March Convention.

We need to "talk up" the 2004 Convention, so we can enlist new members and buyers to come and join us.

There is a possibility that we will be able to secure a Specialty Crop Marketing Grant for 2004. This will be used along with our other advertising campaigns. This money could be used for out of state advertising campaigns in order to enlist new buyers and produce more sales of North Carolina watermelons.

See you at the Convention!

Evaluation of fungicides for control of gummy stem blight of watermelon, 2003.

This experiment was conducted at the Horticultural Crops Research Station near Clinton, NC (coordinates: N35°01.528'; W078°16.864'). Seed was planted on 24 Jul with 2 seed/hill and 2-ft. in row spacing. Irrigation was applied via overhead sprinkler. Treatments were randomized into four complete blocks. Plots were bareground beds on 5-ft centers and 14 ft long with 4-ft fallow borders on each end. A single bed of watermelon plants surrounding the plots was artificially inoculated with *D. bryoniae* 3 times at two-week intervals (24 Jul, 7 and 31 Aug). Inoculum was produced by harvesting spores cultured on potato-dextrose agar and adjusting the concentration to 0.5×10^6 spores/ml and applied using a manual-pump, backpack sprayer. The first two fungicide applications were made with a single-nozzle handheld boom with one pass per plot. All other fungicide treatments were applied using a CO₂ backpack sprayer equipped with a 2-nozzle (19-in. spacing), handheld boom, hollow cone nozzle tips (TXVS-18) and operated at 40 psi (31 gal/A), with one pass per plot. All treatments except Melcast were applied on a 7-day interval with applications on 27 Aug, 3, 9, 16, 23, 30 Sep, and 6 Oct. Melcast treatments were applied on 27 Aug, and 8, 16, 25 Sep according to the accumulation of 35 Environmental Favorability Index (EFI) values which were determined from site-specific weather data supplied by Skybit, Inc. Disease severity of gummy stem blight was evaluated on 7 Oct.

Gummy stem blight was first detected in the plots on 1 Aug, 6 days after the first inoculation. The disease progressed rapidly and nearly eliminated all plants in the non-treated plots. Adverse growing conditions (high moisture early-season and drought late-season, suspected nutrient deficiency and possible herbicide carryover) were such that no marketable fruit were harvested from experimental plots and plant growth and vigor was greatly reduced. Nonetheless, significant differences among treatments were detected. Most striking was the disease control provided by Bravo Weather Stik alternated with BAS 516. The Melcast forecasting system scheduled 3 fewer fungicide applications than the weekly interval and resulted in a slight reduction in disease control. Mixing or alternating strobilurin fungicides (i.e., Quadris, Cabrio and Flint) with Bravo Weather Stik did not improve disease control over Bravo Weather Stik applied alone.

<i>Treatment, rate of product per acre</i>	<i>Disease severity</i> ¹
Non-treated.....	99.5 a ²
Bravo Weather Stik, 2 pt.....	48.8 bc
Bravo Weather Stik (Melcast), 2 pt.....	57.5 b
Bravo Weather Stik, 2 pt alt w/ Quadris, 15.4 fl oz.....	65.0 b
<i>Bravo Weather Stik, 2 pt + Quadris, 15.4 fl oz alt w/ Bravo Weather Stik, 2 pt.....</i>	<i>41.3 bc</i>
<i>Bravo Weather Stik, 2 pt. alt w/ Cabrio, 12 oz.....</i>	<i>57.5 b</i>
<i>Bravo Weather Stik, 2 pt alt w/Flint, 2 oz.....</i>	<i>56.3 b</i>
<i>Bravo Weather Stik, 2 pt alt w/ BAS 516, 0.658 lb.....</i>	<i>11.3 c</i>
<i>Dithane, 2 lb.....</i>	<i>42.5 bc</i>
<i>Bravo Weather Stik, 2 pt (1,2,4,6) alt w/ Quadris, 15.4 fl oz (3,5,7)</i> ³	<i>46.3 bc</i>

¹Disease rating scale based on percent necrosis (gummy stem blight) of foliage (0-100%).

² Values are the means of 4 replicate plots; treatments followed by the same letter(s) within a column are not significantly different (P=.05, Student-Newman Keuls test)

³ Numbers in parentheses indicate which week products were applied.



Britt Cobb Appointed NC Agriculture Commissioner

Britt Cobb was recently sworn in as North Carolina's agriculture commissioner during a ceremony at the State Capitol. Associate Supreme Court Justice Sarah Parker administered the oath of office.

Gov. Mike Easley appointed Cobb to fill the unexpired 4-year term. Commissioner Cobb will serve until January 2005.

"During his decades of service to the department, and in the past six months as interim commissioner, Britt has displayed passion and dedication for the North Carolina agricultural community," Easley said. "I know he will continue to accomplish great things for the industry and our state."

The commissioner oversees the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, which has about 1,300 employees and is responsible for food safety, animal health, accuracy in weights and measures, pest control, soil testing, the N.C. State Fair, farm product marketing and more.

"My priorities for the next year are to continue my life's work to expand markets for North Carolina products, improve profitability for agriculture and continue to provide the services farmers and consumers in the state expect and deserve," Commissioner Cobb said.

A 31-year department employee, Commissioner Cobb began his career as a food distribution representative. He served as the director of agriculture for North Carolina's European Office from 1976 through 1979. Commissioner Cobb worked in the department's marketing division from 1979 until being appointed interim agriculture commissioner in June. Commissioner Cobb is also past president of the N.C. World Trade Association and serves on many other agriculture and trade associations.

Commissioner Cobb grew up on a tobacco farm in Elm City and still owns the family farm in Wilson County. He graduated in 1971 with a bachelor of science degree in business administration from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He and his wife, Ann, live in Raleigh.

(On Monday, December 29, 2003 Commissioner Cobb announced that he will seek a full term in 2004. He will face off in a May primary against fellow Democrat Tom Gilmore. "The longer I was in the job, the more I realized it was a great opportunity to continue my life's work," Cobb said. "It's an opportunity to really do a lot of good.")

Editors note: We are pleased to welcome Commissioner Britt Cobb as a Guest Speaker at the NCWA Convention in March.